

From the Office of Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz

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For Immediate Release

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**PUBLIC TO HELP PICK NEW VOTING MACHINES Electronic
voting to begin on Election Day, 2005**

Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz announced that she will seek public opinion in selecting a contractor to supply Connecticut towns with electronic voting machines for use beginning with the November, 2005 municipal elections.

“To our knowledge this is the first time the public will be asked to participate in the awarding of a state contract,” Bysiewicz said. “Hopefully, this will set a new standard as we look for ways to improve the integrity of and public confidence in the state contracting process.”

A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been issued for purchase of one electronic voting machine for each of the state’s 769 polling places, as required by the federal “Help America Vote Act” (HAVA) of 2002. Authored by Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd and signed into law by President Bush, HAVA mandates that all states must update their voting systems by January 1, 2006.

Part of the contracting process will include a series of demonstrations around the state where the public will be invited to try out and comment on the various voting systems being considered. The Department of Public Policy at the University of Connecticut will survey participants, with findings considered in a final selection.

“Our goal is to help alleviate concerns that have arisen over the past two presidential elections and integrate public opinion into the selection process,” said UConn Public Policy Project Development Director Chris Barnes.

Bysiewicz also said there will be no cost to the state as federal funding will cover the cost of new voting machines purchased by the state on behalf of municipalities.

“We have received over \$30 million from Washington for election reforms, of which the lion’s share has already been set aside for new voting systems,” she said. “HAVA is probably the most important civil rights legislation since the Federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, and will ultimately go a long way to increase public confidence in our electoral process.”

Under the RFP, vendor proposals are due by February 23 and the new voting machines must meet all federal and state requirements. For example, current Connecticut law contains a “full-face” ballot provision, which mandates that voters be able to view the entire ballot simultaneously.

Following the 2005 elections, towns will also have the option to apply for additional electronic voting machines through Bysiewicz’ office on a first come first served basis.

Mechanical lever voting has been used almost exclusively in Connecticut for over 50 years, but lever machines do not meet new federal standards, such as a paper audit trail and providing persons with disabilities the opportunity to vote privately and independently. Approximately 3,300 lever voting machines are used throughout the state on Election Day.

Complete copies of the RFP can be obtained from the state Department of Administrative Services or by visiting their website at www.das.state.ct.us